REPORT OF MEETING OF WATER ORTON PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE WORKING GROUP

Meeting Date: Monday 20 January 2025

Prepared by:
Cllr Rees
Rachel Scully, the Clerk

F25.01	**Election Of Chair:**	
	Wendy Rees chaired the meeting.	
F25.02	**Apologies**	
	Apologies received from Cllr Stuart and Cllr Chown	
F25.03	**Declarations of Interest and dispensations:**	
	None	
F25.04	**Draft Budget 2025/26:**	
	A draft budget has been prepared showing total income of £102,427.85 and total expenditure (including from earmarked reserves) of £154,402.90. It is proposed that the precept is £89,460.05 which is a monetary increase of £1,754.12 a 2% on last year's figure of £87,705.90. This represents in monetary terms with an increase for Band D properties of £71.53 per year, £1.38 per week. The estimated VAT refund due from 2023-2024 is £11,331.49 and 2024-2025 £1633.03. Below is a summary of the budget. The full information relating to previous year is on the attached, (**Appendix 11a)**	

	Proposed Budget 2025-26
Precept	£89,460.05
other income	£12,967.90
Total Income	**£102,427.85**
Expenditure	
Staffing Costs	£47,120.00
Office Admin	£19,116.29
Pavilion	£5,464.30
Maintenance	£14,358.65
Council Expenditure	£6,893.66
Spend Earmarked reserves	£61,450.00
Total expenditure	**£154,402.90**

	Recommendation: The Parish Council to consider and resolve to approve the following recommendations and proposal of the Finance meeting: a) the planned expenditure as set out in the draft budget. b) the draft budget for 2025/26. c) the proposed precept amount **(Appendix 11b)** The Finance meeting considered and discussed Cllr Rees having access to Scribe Accounts proposed on a view only basis being the Chair of finance and the Councillor involved in the finances of the Parish Council. The Clerk in the meantime to contact Scribe Accounting to obtain more information. **Recommendation:** The Parish Council to consider and resolve to approve the recommendation that Cllr Rees should have to access on a view only basis to Scribe Accounting. The Finance meeting in future meetings have proposed reviewing and discussing the Chubb Agreement with any recommendations to be made to the Parish Council.	
F25.05	**Fees and Charges 2025/26:**	
	The Finance meeting discussed whether there should be any increases to the fees and charges for pavilion hire and rent for 2025/26. When the insurance renewal was due for 2024 it was suggested that the Parish Council should consider requesting an asset review with the Valuations Office. The finance meeting could then review rates in preparation for next year's budget. The council also needs to calculate how much the Pavilion costs to run to help determine a realistic hourly rate. Rates were increased by 4% last year. **Recommendation:** The Parish Council to consider and resolve to approve the recommendation that there should be no increases to the fees and charges for pavilion hire and rent applied for 2025/26.	
F25.06	**Transfers to Reserves:**	
	The Finance meeting discussed the transfer of funds to earmarked reserve funds that should be considered and decided before year end for 2025/26. Guttering work still needs to be done. General reserves represent running costs held as a contingency. Although no elections are anticipated need to keep as reserve should this change. Section 137 is to cover any spend not covered elsewhere should this arise. The grant is awaiting spend. It is thought wise to include earmarked reserve towards van replacement should this be needed.	

Earmarked Reserves	2024-25		2025-26
	balance	spend	balance
Guttering work on pavilion	2,500.00	-	2,500.00
General Reserves	45,000.00	-	50,000.00
Elections	4,680.00	-	4,680.00
Section 137	520.00	-	520.00
Spud Club	-	6,979.00	-
Hardship Fund	-	2,500.00	-
WCC Grant	-		750.00
Van Replacement	-	-	3,000.00
totals	**52,700.00**	**9,479.00**	**61,450.00**

Recommendation:
The Parish Council to consider and resolve to approve the recommendations and proposals of the Finance meeting regarding the transfer of earmarked reserves as outlined above.

The Finance meeting discussed the Hardship Fund in the sum of that is allocated by North Warwickshire to the Borough Councillors. The Parish Council received funds in the sum of £2,500 and was placed in the Parish Council's earmarked reserves which were allocated to Cllr Stuart for the purpose to go to Spud Club.

Recommendation:
The Parish Council to approve the payment of £2500 held in earmarked reserves for the Hardship Fund to Spud Club.

F25.07 **Appointment of Auditor:**

The Finance meeting discussed and considered the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2025/26.

Recommendation:
The Parish Council to consider and resolve to approve the recommendation to appoint Kim Squires as the Internal Auditor for the Parish Council for 2025/26 **(Appendix 11c)**

F25.08 **Commercial Van Insurance:**

The Finance meeting discussed the commercial quotations for the renewal of the Parish Council's van insurance due on 23 January 2025 to be ratified at the full Parish Council meeting on Thursday 30 January 2025. The Clerk obtained a few insurance quotations for comparison. The quote from Coversure £1,914.91. The most competitive quote was that of Madoc and Rhodes in the sum £1,499.32 which the Finance meeting agreed in view payment was due before the Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Council is requested to resolve to ratify the payment in the sum of £1,499.32 in relation to the renewal of the van insurance. **(Appendix 11d)**

F25.09	**Croner Group:**	
	The Finance meeting discussed and considered the quotation of £126.59 + VAT per calendar month on a fixed 3-year term and whether to continue with the subscription to Croner Group for Human Resource Services. There are a number of proposed changes in the Employment Rights Bill released in October 2024. The Bill is currently in the report stage of the House of Commons and will then need to go progress through the House of Lords before Royal Assent. Parish Council will need expert help in making sure any recommendations are carried out once the Bill becomes law so the support of HR Services would be invaluable. Employment Rights Bill released 10/10/2024: 28 proposed changes. **Recommendation:** The Parish Council to consider and resolve to approve the recommendation to continue with the subscription with Croner Group for Human Resources Services fixed for 3 years in the sum of £151.90 per month **(Appendix 11e)**	
F25.10	**Pavilion Costs-Utilities:**	
	The Finance meeting discussed and considered recommendation whether to approach and instruct Utility Aid or other suitable organisations such as Clear to review the contract costs in relation to the utilities for the Pavilion. It is important to ensure the Parish Council are paying the best competitive rates and this would take up a lot of the clerk's time. There is no cost to the council for this work and no obligation to follow the recommendations**.** **Recommendation:** The Parish Council to consider and resolve to approve the recommendation for the Clerk to approach Utility Aid and Clear Utility Solutions to see whether they could assist in obtaining more competitive costs in relation to the utilities for the Pavilion, on the basis that there are on extra costs or fees incurred by the Parish Council in obtaining the information	
F25.11	**Date, Time and Place of the next Finance Working Group Meeting:**	
	The Finance meeting proposed to discuss and plan the dates and times for the finance meetings for the year 2025/26.	